



News Release

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Media Contact:

April Bennett

UDOH Center for Multicultural Health

(801) 538-9432

Utah Asians Enjoy Low Obesity Rates *But females struggle with pregnancy problems*

(Salt Lake City, UT) - A new Utah Department of Health (UDOH) report explores health issues among the state's Asian population. Utah Asians are healthier than the statewide population in several areas:

- 7.3% of Utah Asians are obese. At 21.3%, the state obesity rate is nearly triple that.
- Fewer Utah Asians die of coronary heart disease than other Utahns.
- Fewer Utah Asian teenagers give birth than other Utah teenagers.

“The rest of us could learn a lot from Utah Asians about the advantages of maintaining a healthy weight,” said April Young Bennett of the UDOH Center for Multicultural Health (CMH). “Utah Asians are the only Utah racial group that is meeting the state goal for a low obesity rate and that may explain why, as a group, they have fewer chronic health problems than other Utahns.”

Bennett clarified that it can't be assumed that all Utah Asians are healthy. “Overall, Utah Asians seem to suffer from fewer health disparities than other Utah racial and ethnic minorities,” she explained. “But Asians are also more diverse than other Utah racial and ethnic groups. Their diversity may mask important health differences between national origins and other socio-demographic factors.” Less than twenty percent of Asian immigrants to Utah have come from the same country of origin.

Health leaders are concerned that Utah Asians are unequally affected by poor pregnancy outcomes.

- 6.2% of Asian pregnant women in Utah experience gestational diabetes, compared with 3.2% of all pregnant women in Utah.
- 9.6% of Asian babies in Utah are born at a low birth weight, compared to 6.8% of all Utah babies.

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Like other Utahns, Asians would also benefit from improved access to health care, better nutrition and more physical activity.

Kumar Shah, Chair of the Ethnic Health Advisory Committee, emphasized that people of all races should work together to eliminate these shared problems. “We should focus on these common problems first,” he said. “Poverty and lack of access to health care affect all races and national origins. We can all benefit from living healthier lifestyles by not smoking, eating the right foods, and exercising, even though genetics makes some races more susceptible to certain health problems than others.”

The report is fourth in a series on the health of racial and ethnic minorities in Utah. The final report about the health of Utah American Indians will be issued on March 11, 2009.

See the complete report at:

<http://health.utah.gov/cmh/data/disparitiessummary/AsianFactSheet.pdf>

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.